"*We are* THE ADVANCE GUARD OF A MASSIVE MORAL REVOLUTION FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM."

A. Philip Randolph

ON A HOT SUMMER DAY in 1963, the "advance guard" came to Washington, D.C. They came by bus, they came by train, they came by car and by plane, and one man reportedly even roller-skated to Washington from Chicago, over a thousand kilometers away.

MORE THAN 250,000 PEOPLE—BLACK AND WHITE, Protestant, Catholic, and Jew—converged on the U.S. capital to demand social and economic equality for African Americans. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was the idea of A. Philip Randolph, a prominent labor and civil rights leader, and it was sponsored by five of the largest civil rights organizations in the country. The U.S. Supreme Court had called for an end to segregation in public schools in 1954, yet African Americans continued to suffer discrimination and segregation, not only in education but in housing, employment, voting practices, and the use of public facilities. From 1955 on, civil rights activists had staged boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and other forms of nonviolent resistance around the United States. And in 1963, they came to Washington in a grand event of peaceful protest to challenge America to fulfill the democratic ideals set forth in the nation's Declaration of Independence,

"...that all men are created equal."

The massive demonstration was a high point for the civil rights movement, and it had an undeniable impact both on government legislation and on public opinion. The March on Washington helped secure passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Today, legal segregation has been long eliminated, a record number of black elected officials serve throughout the United States, and African Americans hold leadership positions in all sectors of society—from government to industry, from academia to the mass media.

Produced by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Editor: Rosalie Targonski. Design: Diane K. Woolverton. All photographs AP/Wide World Photos, except Panel 2: © Flip Schulke, Corbis.

1963

AUGUST 28th

Above: Martin Luther King, Jr., acknowledges the demonstrators gathered between the Washington Monument (in background) and the Lincoln Memorial (top). Right: President Kennedy welcomes civil rights leaders at the White House; left to right: Whitney Young of the National Urban League, King, Rabbi Joachim Prinz of the American Jewish Congress, A. Philip Randolph, Kennedy, Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers, and RoyWilkins.

"I have A DREAM *today."*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

BY 11 O'CLOCK ON THE morning of August 28, 1963, the marchers had assembled at the Washington Monument. They carried simple placards that outlined their demands: school integration, fair housing laws, equal rights, jobs for all.

THE DEMONSTRATORS CARRIED THEIR MESSAGE to the Lincoln Memorial, where they gathered for an afternoon of songs, speeches, and prayers. After the national anthem was sung, speaker after speaker called on the assembled crowd to step up civil rights protests. Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People told the marchers, "Just by your presence here today we have spoken loudly and eloquently to our legislature."

The final—and most eloquent—speaker on the program was Martin Luther King, Jr., who electrified the crowd with his now famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In one of his most memorable passages, King shared the hope that,

> "…my four little children will one day live
> in a nation where they will not be judged
> by the color of their skin
> but by the content of their character."

The March on Washington was the largest demonstration of its kind up to that point in U.S. history, and it was televised live to millions of people. Immediately after the march, organizers met with President John F. Kennedy at the White House. Earlier that summer, Kennedy had sent civil rights legislation to the U.S. Congress, with the message, "We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution."

Above: Martin Luther King, Jr., surrounded by supporters, delivers his unforgettable "I Have a Dream" speech during the 1963 March on Washington.